



Workplace Satisfaction Project Appreciation Tools

High workplace satisfaction and morale are primarily based on a handful of fundamental concepts which are universal to all organizations. One of these fundamentals is the demonstration of appreciation and value. Every employee wants to be shown that their effort and hard work are appreciated, and that their contributions are valued. High-satisfaction workplaces report that such demonstrations of appreciation are frequent, freely given, and sincere, while low-satisfaction workplaces report that such appreciation is rare or absent, and less-than-sincere.

Any means by which appreciation is shown contributes to higher employee satisfaction; no one needs a 'perfect' display of appreciation, they simply want to feel appreciation regularly. Showing appreciation should also be specific and timely when related to accomplishments or milestones. The only way that appreciation can fail in a workplace is if it does not occur. Oftentimes in the NPS, appreciation fails because supervisors are too busy to take time to show it. This can be coupled with a failure to remember to praise high-performing employees because it simply seems obvious (and therefore unnecessary to say) that the employee is valuable and appreciated. *All* employees want and need validation, whether high-performing or not. The only thing a supervisor, manager, or peer needs to do to provide this validation is to simply take the time to do it.

Note: each employee has their own preferred means of showing them appreciation. Some enjoy the visibility of a public award, while others prefer a word in private; some like a verbal 'thanks', while others like a note in their mailbox. A good supervisor will show an employee appreciation in that employee's own preferred 'language'.

- Formal appreciation: Awards
 - o DOI awards
 - o Park-specific awards
 - o Awards of other agencies or organizations
 - o Time off awards
 - o Quality Step Increase
 - o May be created at any time, at any level! Use your imagination
- Formal appreciation: Public presentation
 - o All-employee meeting
 - o Division meeting
 - o Team meeting
 - o Event open to the public
- Informal awards
 - o Schwag: coffee mugs, t-shirts, small tokens of all types
 - o Celebratory food
 - o Certificates
 - o Challenge coins
 - o Funny trophies, plaques, or gifts
 - o Again, the only limit is your imagination
- Informal award presentations:
 - o Team meeting,
 - o Privately if recipient prefers

- Regular verbal affirmation
 - Anything that shows the employee appreciation is ok! Don't worry about saying exactly the right thing, just say something.
- Written affirmation
 - Handwritten note
 - Email, cc'ing senior managers, peers, and/or subordinates
 - 'Shout out' in management newsletter
- Informal displays of team appreciation
 - Snacks
 - Pizza party
- Simply saying 'Please' and 'Thank you' regularly is a morale booster.
- Giving credit where credit is due, regardless of the means, is always positive. However, taking credit for the work of others or misallocating credit instantly erodes trust and must be strenuously avoided.
- Noticing the little things is very important. Ultimately value is shown through the investment of time, and the little things can only be noticed through taking the time to do so. Commenting on the little things is an effective means of telling others you notice and appreciate them.
- Do not take a motivated, dedicated employee's qualities for granted, or assume that they are self-validating. Show them ample appreciation.
- Sincerity is key. Appreciation or value shown without matching sincerity is deeply damaging to morale.
- Contributions by seasonal employees are often taken completely for granted in the NPS. Be sure to show appreciation to all employees, regardless of their career status.
- Following up with employees, and following through on their concerns and requests, is a significant factor in workplace morale. It demonstrates investment of time and care, and therefore appreciation. Same for active listening and genuine engagement with employees.
- Milestone parties (e.g. retirement, transfer) are a positive NPS tradition that shows real value and appreciation.